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U.S.-NATO COMMAND AND CONTROL: AN AD HOC RELATIONSHIP

by

Marshall Denney III
Major, USMC

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

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ABSTRACT

Although the United States should be prepared to operate within the framework of an alliance or coalition under "other-than-US leadership," American forces will probably be the most capable force and will therefore be expected to play a central leadership role. The standing NATO C2 structure, however, does not adequately account for disparities between U.S. and NATO military capabilities, the heightened requirement for U.S. operational security, or for divergences in national priorities. Without a codified C2 arrangement suitable to both the U.S. and NATO, an ad hoc arrangement will follow—just as it occurred in Operation *Allied Force*. The best solution is for NATO to standardize and codify Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTF) for peacekeeping, and to standardize and codify a different CJTF for major operations that will involve the U.S.

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"…about as murky a command relationship as you could possibly get."

—General Wesley Clark

INTRODUCTION

"There are claims made that the U.S. effectively ran a separate war during Operation *Allied Force*."[1] This statement refers to a French Ministry of Defense comment that, "…despite the universally recognized need for a single command, it has to be admitted that part of the military operations was conducted by the United States outside the strict NATO [command and control]…."[2] Indeed, General Wesley Clark, the Supreme Allied Commander of NATO forces in Europe (SACEUR), attempted to synthesize the separate NATO and U.S. command and control arrangements, but in the end, he described it as "…about as murky a command relationship as you could possibly get."[3]

THESIS

NATO lacks a formal expeditionary command and control architecture and, as *Allied Force* demonstrated, the ad hoc arrangements that prevail are inadequate for both NATO and U.S. operational requirements.[4] Because the conditions that precipitated this ad hoc arrangement are not likely to change in the near future, NATO must codify a command and control architecture into which the United States can plug for effective operations.

This paper examines NATO's ad hoc command and control (C2) arrangement during Operation *Allied Force*. This is accomplished by first highlighting NATO C2, both during and after the Cold War, and then by analyzing three major influences upon U.S.-NATO C2: military capability, operational security, and national priorities. Finally, the author will offer a recommendation for establishing a codified expeditionary C2 structure.

BACKGROUND

NATO Command and Control

During the Cold War, NATO structured its command and control to support large standing forces—both conventional and nuclear.[5] Under Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, the NATO focus was a collective defense against the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact.[6] The Article 5 agreement assures member nations that "…an attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all…."[7] Although NATO does not possess armed forces of its own, its members earmark forces for Alliance operations. These forces remain under individual national command and control until that nation assigns them to NATO for operations.[8]

After the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and collapse of the Soviet Union, the Cold War ended and parts of Europe became regionally unstable. To compensate for this instability, NATO adapted its military structures and capabilities. Besides its traditional defensive role, NATO's new tasks included non-Article 5 operations such as crisis management, peacekeeping, and peace support operations.[9] Nevertheless, many NATO members subsequently decreased their defense spending—some by as much as 25 percent.[10] Since the early 1990s, NATO's ground forces have been cut by 35 percent, while its naval vessels and air force squadrons have been cut by 30 percent and 40 percent respectively.[11] Moreover, the forces not cut are maintained at drastically reduced readiness.[12]

The CJTF Concept

In 1993, NATO initiated a Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) concept designed to facilitate the participation of non-NATO "partner" countries in NATO operations. The concept was subsequently endorsed at the Brussels Summit in January 1994 and later

approved at the Berlin Summit in 1996.[13] The premise of a CJTF is that the forces are "separable but not separate" from the NATO Alliance. Though not specifically called CJTFs, the military components of the CJTF concept have been implemented in deployments such as IFOR, SFOR, and even *Allied Force*. As *Allied Force* demonstrated, with non-Article 5 operations come challenges to the compatibility between NATO and U.S. C2.

Peacekeeping Missions: IFOR/SFOR/KFOR

In September 1995, the Bosnian Serb leadership signed a peace settlement—the Dayton Peace Accord—that ended the Bosnian civil war. By December 1995, NATO began its first major operational peacekeeping mission (i.e., non-Article 5). For this mission, NATO established and led a multinational, military Implementation Force (IFOR) to monitor compliance with the Dayton Peace Accord. IFOR had a one-year mandate, and at the end of 1996, a smaller Stabilization Force (SFOR) took over the peacekeeping mission from IFOR. The lessons from the IFOR/SFOR deployments served as the framework for NATO operations during *Allied Force*.[14]

The Kosovo Force (KFOR) deployed in June 1999 following the 78 day *Allied Force* air operation. Such peacekeeping operations imposed stress on NATO operational command and control capabilities. Brigadier Adrien Freer, a Kosovo Force (KFOR) brigade commander, voiced his frustrations in a highly critical report saying that, "the division of responsibilities between national and NATO operational chains of command took some time to become clear and the confusion which did occur at the tactical level was reflected adversely at the operational and political level." In addition, "…the delay in resolving KFOR direction within national guidelines meant that soldiers were initially operating in something of a vacuum."[15]

ALLIED FORCE SUMMARY OF KEY CONCEPTS

Alliances, Coalitions, and Ad Hoc Relationships

Alliances typically have a mature C2 structure and well-developed procedures.[16] In *Allied Force*, however, the traditional (Article 5) C2 arrangement was abandoned in favor of an ad hoc arrangement—for desegregation of U.S. "sensitive" assets such as stealth aircraft. This resulted in a C2 arrangement resembling a coalition more than an alliance. For reasons that will be addressed later, the U.S. desires to retain greater control over its national forces than is generally associated with the C2 of an alliance.

Coalitions are typically formed on short notice as a rapid response to an unforeseen crisis, usually outside of the alliance area.[17] As opposed to an alliance, coalitions normally include forces not accustomed to working together.[18] The alliance/coalition dichotomy is significant because a coalition is formed *temporarily* to meet a specific crisis and, therefore, the political views of the participants usually have a much greater influence over the ultimate command relationships—as evidenced by parallel NATO and U.S. personnel-only chains of command during *Allied Force*. Indeed, other nations like Great Britain and France also maintained parallel chains of command.[19] One of three basic structures most often characterizes coalitions: parallel, lead nation, or a combination of the two.

Under "parallel" command, no single force commander is designated (see figure 1). Under "lead nation" command, all coalition members subordinate their forces to a single partner (see figure 2). Generally, however, nations are reluctant to grant extensive control over their forces to one lead nation. As a result, lead nation and parallel command structures may exist simultaneously within a coalition. This combination occurs when two or more nations are controlling elements for a mix of international forces, as in the command

arrangement for the Gulf War coalition.[20] For *Allied Force*, however, neither of these two structures—lead nation nor parallel—adequately illustrate its ad hoc arrangement. For example, there was a single force commander designated (SACEUR)—therefore it was not completely "parallel." Moreover, not all NATO members subordinated their forces to a single member; therefore, it was not "lead nation." Finally, the U.S.-only task force, JTF *Noble Anvil*, did not control a mix of international forces; therefore, it was not a "combination." This demonstrates that the C2 arrangement for *Allied Force* did not follow doctrinal guidelines and was therefore "ad hoc."

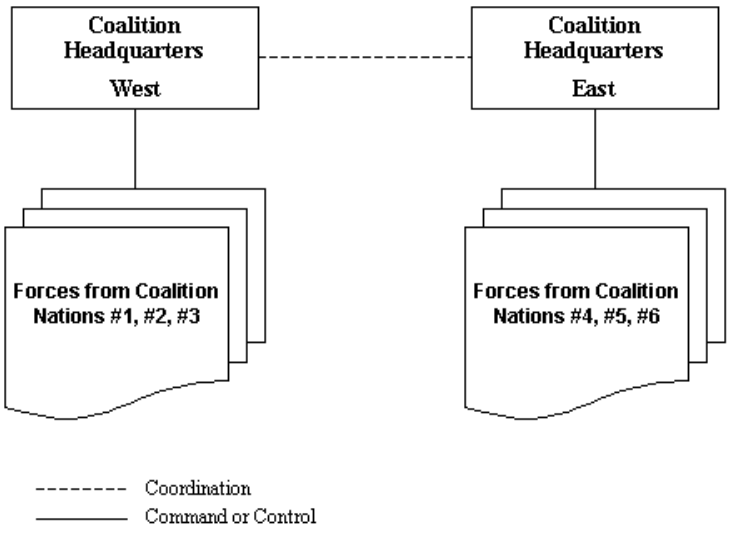

Figure 1. Parallel Command Relationships.

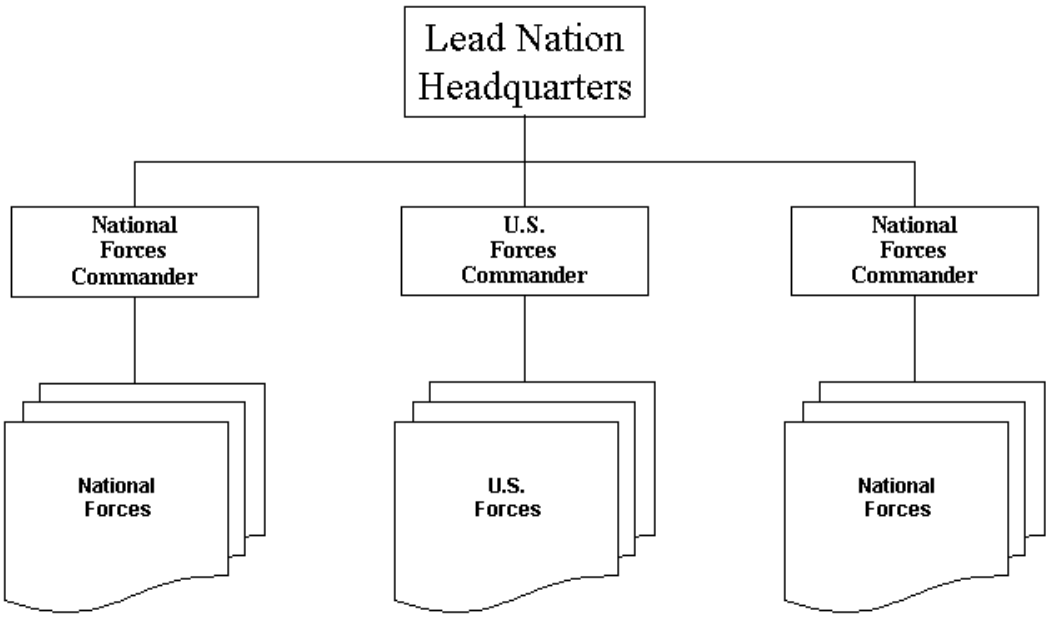

Figure 2. Lead Nation Command Relationships.

Allied Force Command and Control

In *Allied Force*, there were 19 NATO member nations with General Wesley Clark as the overall commander of forces (SACEUR). As SACEUR, General Clark reported through the NATO Military Committee to the North Atlantic Council (NAC), the NATO political leadership.[21] General Clark, however, served not only as SACEUR but also as the commander-in-chief of the U.S. European Command (CINCEUR). As CINCEUR, he reported through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense. This meant that General Clark, as SACEUR and as CINCEUR, was "dual-hatted." Moreover, as can be seen in the figures below, many of General Clark's subordinate commanders were also dual-hatted.

As dual-hatted commanders, these officers operated in a very complex command architecture.[22] With so many commanders and operational functions dual-hatted, many

officers found it difficult to divine their function within the structure. For example, the NATO Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC) was the command and control hub for both NATO and U.S.-only air operations. The collocation of these separate structures resulted in a "flawed organizational structure" that caused "conflicting guidance, command echelons being skipped or omitted entirely, and either a duplication of effort or functions not being performed at all, since one organization erroneously thought the other was responsible for a particular task."[23]

United States Command Relations. (See Figures 3 and 5)

The source of much of this confusion can be traced back to the formation of a joint task force—JTF *Noble Anvil*—by General Clark. The purpose of this task force was to coordinate U.S. "classified assets" which were not releasable in terms of the detailed operating procedures into other unclassified (or lesser classified) channels.[24] This was a supporting task force to *Allied Force*s South (AFSOUTH), and both were commanded by Admiral James Ellis.[25] Following the precedent set by the IFOR/SFOR operations in Bosnia, however, General Clark took direct personal control of the air operation—which essentially usurped the command of Admiral Ellis as the JTF *Noble Anvil* commander.

Moreover, as can be seen in figure 3, there was a Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF) and a Joint Psychological Operations Task Force (JPOTF) that were commanded and controlled as U.S.-only assets, and not linked or integrated with any NATO counterparts.

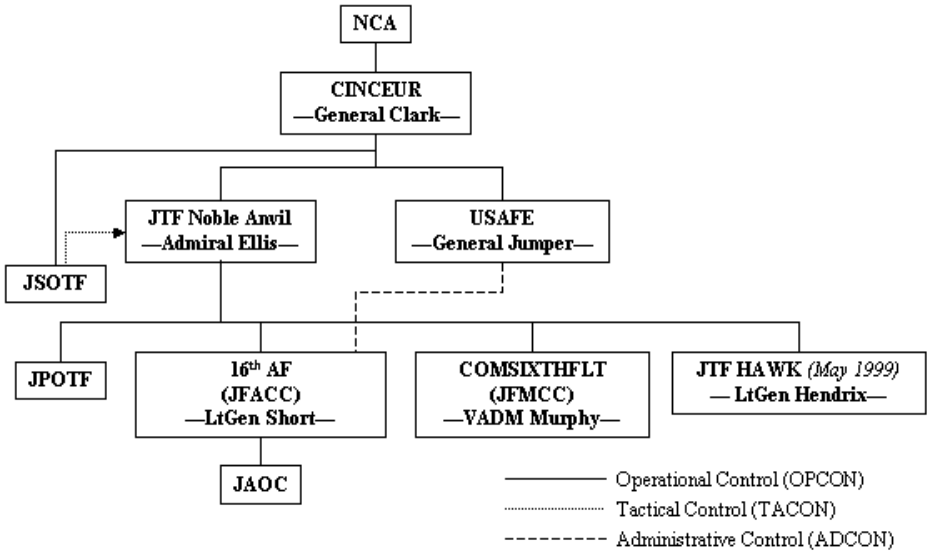

Figure 3. U.S. Command Relationships in Operation *Allied Force*.

NATO Command Relations. (See Figure 4 and 5)

The NATO command ran from General Clark's headquarters at SHAPE through AFSOUTH, an air operation that was supported strongly by the U.S. 16th Air Force. Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC) was in Macedonia and the ACE Mobile Force Land, which Clark deployed in early April in response to the humanitarian catastrophe, was in Albania. Therefore, General Clark and his staff had headquarters in Italy, Macedonia, and Albania. General Clark also stood up a U.S. Joint Task Force (JTF Shining Hope) around a U.S. Air Force and Marine team, to be able to provide air transportation and intra-country lift to both of these headquarters to assure delivery of humanitarian supplies.[26] With this arrangement, it is no surprise that General Clark described it as follows, "…when you hear people say well, they weren't quite sure what was happening, why was this done, why

was that done, it should not surprise anyone...this is about as complex a command structure as anyone would ever fear to see."[27]

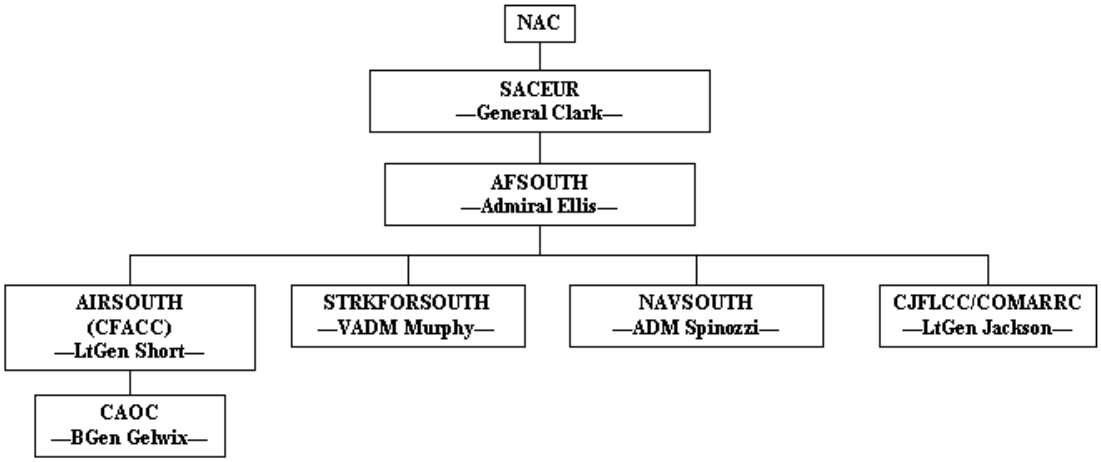

Figure 4. NATO Command Relationships in Operation *Allied Force*.

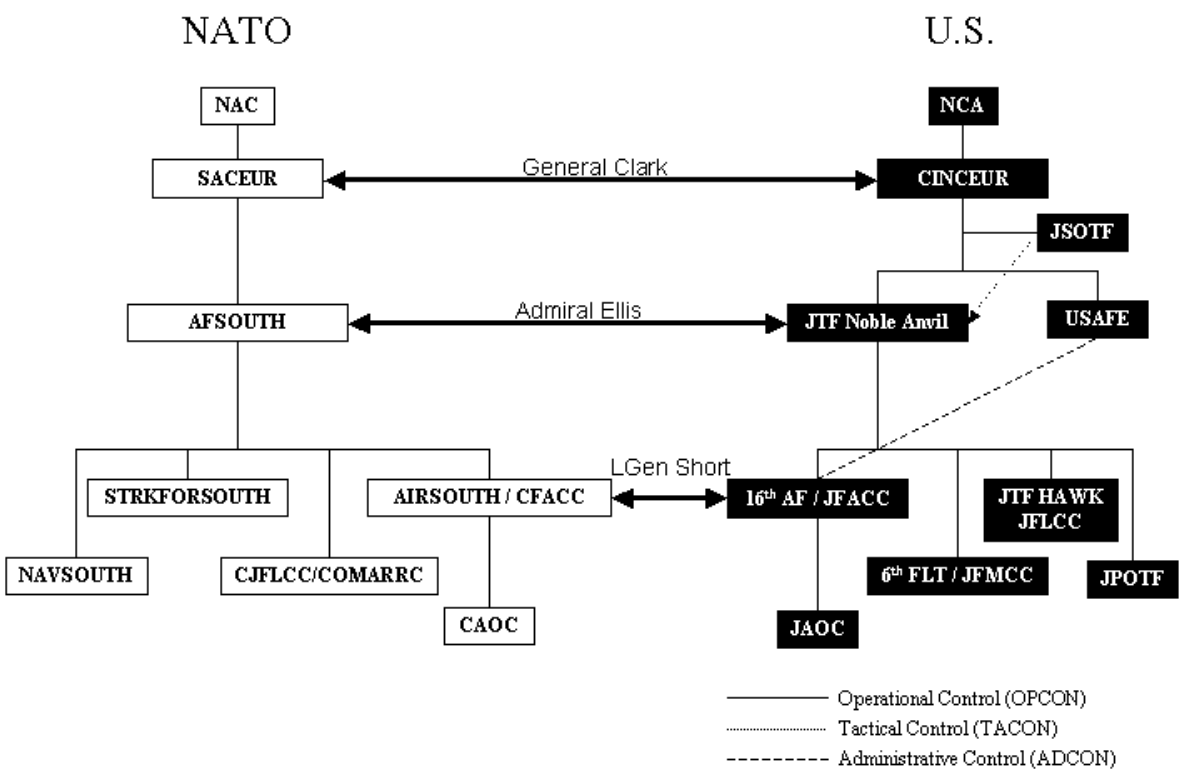

Figure 5. NATO-U.S. Command Relationships in Operation *Allied Force*.

The anatomy of this complexity is manifested in the three major influences upon U.S.-NATO C2 that were mentioned earlier: military capability, operational security, and national priorities.

THREE MAJOR INFLUENCES UPON U.S.-NATO C2

Military Capabilities

In a trend that is unlikely to change in the near future, there are growing disparities between U.S. and NATO member nation military capabilities such as: precision strike, all-weather capabilities; cruise missiles and other stand-off weapons; electronic warfare; and command, control, and communications capabilities. These gaps impede U.S. efforts to operate within traditional or ad hoc NATO C2 architecture. Indeed, *Allied Force* served only to highlight these growing discrepancies. For example, because few NATO allies could

employ precision munitions in sufficient numbers (or at all), the United States conducted the preponderance of the strike sorties during the early stages of the conflict. Moreover, problems with communication interoperability persisted throughout the campaign.[28] With no secure radio capability or a lack of secure radio interoperability between U.S. and some NATO aircraft, the C2 arrangement was put under heavy stress. For example, some NATO pilots could not communicate securely at all, and some pilots could not communicate securely with U.S. pilots, often forcing U.S. pilots to communicate "in the clear." This endangered operational security because the Serbians could easily eavesdrop on pilot radio communications.

Many Alliance members lacked the high technology assets of the U.S. For example, other Alliance members could not conduct airborne electronic warfare, nor did they have stealth bombers. Furthermore, at the beginning of *Allied Force*, France was still three to four years away from developing cruise missiles as capable as those launched by the U.S. and Great Britain. The significance of this gap in technology, as the French learned, was that "a country that has cruise missiles retains control over how they are used, but on the other hand, a country that doesn't have any can find itself excluded from part of the decision-making process on strikes." Britain's Defense Ministry concluded, as the French had, that Europeans needed to build defense structures better suited to operations like Kosovo in the future. The technology gap between the U.S. and members such as the British and French demonstrated the inability of their forces to gather and pass battlefield information securely and quickly.[29] The bottom line is that disparities in capabilities will seriously affect the ability of NATO to operate as an effective, integrated alliance.

Operational Security

The U.S. was very cautious about sharing sensitive information with other participants of *Allied Force*—particularly because some participants were not Alliance members. This led the U.S. to maintain an Air Tasking Order (ATO) separate from the NATO ATO. While the NATO ATO was distributed to all of the Alliance members (including the U.S.), the U.S.-only ATO was released only to American personnel. The reason for the U.S.-only ATO was to maintain maximum secrecy of stealth, and stealth-support missions. Because ATOs contain all data on each mission for that given day, executing two separate ATOs led to confusion when U.S. aircraft appeared on NATO radars without prior coordination.[30] Moreover, this use of dual ATOs often caused friction at the tactical level when U.S. planners had to use support aircraft for both NATO and U.S.-only missions. The friction resulted from the fact that the U.S.-only ATO was typically released several hours before the NATO ATO. In fact, the NATO ATO was sometimes released after midnight on the same day it was to be executed.

A possible explanation for the delay in releasing the NATO ATO was in the U.S. practice of withholding targeting data from some of the Alliance members for as long as possible—often until the day the mission was to be planned. Vice Admiral Daniel Murphy attributed the withholding of such information to "…a reflection of the very real concern that all the senior commanders had, that we didn't have an airtight security system within some area of the NATO operation."[31]

Another example concerning operational security came from how the U.S. classified its battle damage assessments (BDA). BDAs were often classified at levels that precluded their release to other Alliance members, and subsequently kept the U.S. and NATO planners from integrating operational deception efforts.[32]

Furthermore, operational security concerns resulted in a reduced sharing of information even between planning bases. For example, when airspace control measures were developed at the CAOC in Vicenza, Italy, to support Kosovo Engagement Zone (KEZ) operations, they were sent to the various mission planning cells (i.e., Aviano and Brindisi Air Bases, in Italy, for tactical planning), but were not authorized to be distributed within the CAOC. This had a negative impact because the CAOC is where much of the initial, administrative aviation planning took place.

Solidifying the desire of the U.S. to close-hold its intelligence was the fact that a French military officer, Major Pierre-Henri Bunel, was accused of passing NATO's overall target plans to a Yugoslav diplomat in Brussels. As a result, by the end of the second week of the campaign, NATO changed the way bombing orders were distributed. General Clark remarked, "we restricted who had access to the air tasking orders and we tightened them up and we kept sensitive items off the ATOs."[33] NATO spokesman Jamie Shea told the British Broadcasting Corp (BBC) that, "…NATO took extreme measures to make sure that its operational planning remained secret…"[34]

When NATO finally brings the CJTF concept online, it will be a multinational and multi-service task force that may include elements from non-NATO troop contributing nations. This will only increase U.S. operational security concerns. The reality is that there is a U.S. practice of withholding sensitive intelligence from some allies, and this practice is an indicator of ad hoc C2 inadequacy.

National Priorities

Evidence suggests that a lack of investment in defense is at the top of the list for reasons such disparities exist.[35] Even before the fighting in Kosovo ended, NATO launched

an initiative to close the gap in five areas—one of which was command and control. Some NATO members face strict limits on deficit spending and government debt imposed by the EU's 1991 agreement on monetary union. Indeed, NATO's European members are unlikely to meet alliance defense goals set for themselves.[36] For this reason, NATO's secretary general, Lord Robertson, explained that this is why European allies very much want the U.S. to continue as the mainstay of the alliance.[37]

Because of the inefficiencies of the European defense effort, "Europe accounts for about 40 percent of NATO spending but contributes only about 10 percent of the capability." The key lesson learned from *Allied Force* was that the air forces of the U.S. and its European allies were no longer "interoperable" because the Europeans lack the advanced technology of American warplanes. As is usually the case in peacetime, politicians find that cutting military spending incurs less political risk than slashing farm subsidies or health programs.[38]

The U.S., on the other hand, provided roughly 60 percent of the sorties flown and two-thirds of the aircraft used in the campaign.[39] The U.S. quickly took over target selection and management of the war to a degree that troubled both allies and American domestic opinion.[40] The disparity existed because European forces could not match American capabilities in surveillance, all-weather precision munitions, and stealth technology.

IMPLICATIONS ON OPERATIONAL C2

The *Allied Force* C2 arrangement violated the following operational command and control tenets: unity of effort, centralized direction and decentralized execution, to provide an environment for applying common doctrine, and to ensure interoperability.

Unity of Effort[41]

Unity of effort is one of the main prerequisites of successful performance by a command. While unity of effort is normally achieved through unity of command of national forces (e.g., Admiral Ellis as commander of JTF *Noble Anvil*), for multinational forces unity of effort is usually achieved through cooperation. Although *Allied Force* had an overall commander (General Clark as SACEUR), factors such as national self-interest, differences in military culture and language, and even the personalities of the commanders prevented establishment of an organization based on unity of command. Also eroding the unity of effort were the differing political and financial interests of the NATO members—which clearly made them reluctant, or even unwilling, to support attacks against certain targets. As a result, General Short was never able to mass his forces in an integrated campaign plan.

Centralized Direction and Decentralized Execution[42]

Ideally, centralized direction is provided at the national-strategic level. For NATO, the national-strategic direction emanated from the North Atlantic Council (NAC), and for the U.S., the National Command Authorities (NCA). This parallel arrangement created "the predictable fits and starts of trying to prosecute an air operation through an alliance of 19 members bound by a unanimity rule."[43] This arrangement allowed one or more of the key NATO countries to disapprove targets, for countries to not allow attacks launched from their soil, or to refuse striking targets themselves but allowing other allies to strike."[44] These arrangements all coalesced to undermine centralized direction.

Decentralized execution is a tenet closely related to that of centralized direction. In decentralized execution, a higher commander, in issuing guidance, specifies only what is to be accomplished—leaving subordinates to determine the best means to accomplish the mission.[45] During *Allied Force*, however, "…the highest levels both in Washington and in

Brussels placed unique stresses on [General Short's] ability to command and control allied air operations." For example, "General Short and his staff had to contend on an unrelenting basis with rapid shifts in political priorities and SACEUR guidance." Furthermore, "all of these problems emanated from a lack of consensus among the top decisionmakers on both sides of the Atlantic as to what the air effort's military goals were at any given moment and what it would take to prevail."[46]

Common Doctrine

Common doctrine is the essential element for efficient and effective employment of national and multinational forces. This requires maximum interoperability—an element that was already proven to be lacking in *Allied Force*. Without the ability to integrate assets and procedures, NATO could not apply its doctrine or tactics and techniques. The same restrictions held true for the U.S. As Lieutenant General Short stated, "…I'd have done this a whole lot differently than I was allowed to do. We could have done this differently. We should have done this differently."[47] To bolster interoperability, NATO must: develop and apply joint doctrine, tactics and techniques, plans, training, and procurement processes.

CONCLUSION

While U.S. doctrine states the "Armed Forces of the United States should be prepared to operate within the framework of an alliance or coalition under other-than-US leadership,"[48] American forces will probably be the predominant and most capable force within NATO, and will be expected to play a central leadership role. Such was the case during *Allied Force* because the U.S. brought the preponderance of combat capability.[49]

The standing NATO C2 structure does not adequately account for the disparity between U.S. and NATO military capabilities, the requirement of U.S. operational security,

or divergences in national priorities. The result of this inadequacy will continue to be ad hoc command and control arrangements. *Allied Force* illustrated that potential impacts of ad hoc C2 arrangements are: a lack of unity of effort, violations of the "centralized command/decentralized control" tenet, and non-executable doctrine. Security problems—actual or potential—will deter American commanders from using the formal allied C2 structure.

Given the expansion of NATO from a design for collective defense (Article 5 operations) to one of collective security (non-Article 5 operations), ad hoc command and control arrangements are not likely to change in the near future. Without proper standardization and codification, parallel C2 structures can create confusion and frustration for those who have to use them. To promote operational command and control efficiency and effectiveness, NATO must codify a C2 architecture that meets the operational needs of U.S. forces so that the U.S. can integrate as seamlessly as possible.

RECOMMENDATION

While the peacekeeping forces—IFOR, SFOR, KFOR—used a quasi-CJTF concept, they did not stress the operational command and control structure to the same degree as Operation *Allied Force*. The best solution is for NATO to standardize and codify CJTFs for peacekeeping, and to standardize and codify a different CJTF for major operations that will rely on extensive use of U.S. strategic assets. This CJTF must be U.S.-led with Standardized Agreements (STANAGs) among all participants on the strategies and tactics to be used when employing U.S. forces. In this arrangement, the U.S. could retain operational control over its "sensitive assets" while also promoting cooperation and decentralized execution. This would be accomplished via a mutual U.S.-NATO understanding of each member's role in the

command and control architecture—because this architecture would be codified and exercised. In this way, the European and U.S. assets can be employed efficiently, effectively, and most importantly, synchronized. To enable greater European participation in "sensitive" U.S. operations, NATO must ensure that members are not assigned to staffs or cells without appropriate clearances—to avoid filling billets with people who have restrictions on their access to classified information. A standing U.S.-NATO CJTF will provide NATO with a powerful arrow to draw from among the lighter arrows in its quiver.

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NOTES

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[3] Ibid.

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[5] NATO in the 21st Century, 6-7.

[6] The North Atlantic Treaty.

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[25] Department of Defense, Kosovo/Operation Allied Force After-Action Report (Washington, DC: 31 January 2000), 16-20.

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[27] General Clark Transcript.

[28] Lambeth, 166-170.

[29] United Kingdom Select Committee on Defense.

[30] John Tirpak, "Short's View of the Air Campaign," Air Force Magazine, September 1999, 33-47.

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[33] General Clark Transcript.

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[35] William A. Hay and Harvey Sicherman, "Europe's Rapid Reaction Force: What, Why, and How?", Watch on the West, 2 (February 2001).

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[37] NATO, 25-26.

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[41] Milan N. Vego, Operational Warfare, (Naval War College 2000), 187-196.

[42] Ibid, Ibid.

[43] Lambeth, xviii.

[44] Lambeth, 205.

[45] Vego.

[46] Lambeth, 233-234.

[47] William Drozdiak, "Allies Need Upgrade, General Says," Washington Post, 20 June 1999.

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